

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 DPW-01 IO-10 OMB-01 CIAE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 /082 W
----- 021345

R 241013Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1030

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CINCPAC

UNCLAS BANGKOK 3119

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TH

SUBJECT: NEW THAI DEFENSE MINISTER ON U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

GENERAL THAWIT SENIWONG NA AYUTTHAYA, WHO WAS APPOINTED
MINISTER OF DEFENSE IN THE NEW THAI CABINET FEBRUARY 21. HELD
A PRESS CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 19. THE FOLLOWING ARE HIS REMARKS
ON THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND:

REPORTER: WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL VIEW IN REGARD TO THE
PRESENCE OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES IN OUR COUNTRY, SUCH
AS REMNANTS OF THE KMT 93RD ARMY IN CHIANG RAI? WHAT IS
YOUR FEELING ABOUT THEIR PRESENCE HERE?

THAWIT: WHY NOT SAY AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES FRANKLY.

REPORTER: THEN AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES, AS AN EXAMPLE.

THAWIT: BETTER TALK ABOUT AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES,
SINCE IT IS A SUBJECT ALL OF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN. DO
YOU THINK THAT THEY OUGHT TO BE PULLED OUT AT ONCE?

REPORTER: THAT IS A QUESTION I WISH TO ASK YOU.

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THAWIT: I DON'T APPROVE OF THEIR COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL

AT ONCE. NEITHER DO I APPROVE CHASING THEM OUT AT ONCE.
I AM OF THE SAME VIEW AS THE PRIME MINISTER WHEN HE STATED
IN A NEWS CONFERENCE THAT TIME MUST BE GIVEN THEM. AFTER
ASKING THEM TO COME HERE, IT IS NOT AT ALL PROPER TO DEMAND
FOR THEM TO BE WITHDRAWN AT ONCE WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER
NEEDED. THAT IS WRONG. TIME MUST BE GIVEN THEM TO WITH-
DRAW. THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE FORMER GOVERNMENT WAS PROPER.

REPORTER: IN REGARD TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN MILITARY
FORCES, WHAT IS YOUR VIEW CONCERNING TIME...

THAWIT: THERE MUST BE A FIXED TIME.

REPORTER: HOW LONG SHOULD THAT FIXED TIME BE?

THAWIT: MUTUAL AGREEMENT MUST BE REACHED IN THE MATTER.
WE CANNOT FIX IT IN A ONE-SIDED MANNER. AGREEMENT MUST
BE REACHED WHICH IS APPROVED BY BOTH SIDES: I FEEL CERTAIN
THAT NOBODY WANTS TO SEE ANY FOREIGN TROOPS IN OUR COUNTRY.
I KNOW FROM MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE HOW I FELT WHEN JAPANESE
ARMIES ENTERED OUR COUNTRY IN THE PAST, AND HOW I DID NOT
WANT TO WEAR MY UNIFORM AT THAT TIME. BUT WHEN IT WAS
NECESSARY FOR FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES TO COME HERE, WHEN
THAT NECESSITY IS OVER IT WOULD NOT BE AT ALL PROPER FOR
US TO CHASE THEM OUT OF OUR COUNTRY. ESPECIALLY SINCE
THEY CAME HERE IN THE INTERESTS OF THAILAND. IN ORDER TO
PROTECT IN BOTH DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY. THIS IS A FACT
WE ADMIT TO BE TRUE. THEREFORE I DON'T APPROVE OF ANY
MOVE TO CHASE THEM OUT WHEN THE NECESSITY FOR THEIR PRE-
SENCE HERE IS OVER, ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY HAVE NO "FANGS
AND CLAWS". OR IN OTHER WORDS THEY HAVE "FANGS AND CLAWS"
BUT THEY CANNOT USE THEM I OPPOSED SUCH A MOVE ONCE
BEFORE IN THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

REPORTER: FROM WHAT DO YOU GAUGE NECESSITY AND
NO NECESSITY?

THAWIT: WHAT?

REPORTER: WHEN YOU SAY THAT THEIR PRESENCE IS NO
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LONGER NECESSARY, FROM WHAT IS THAT GAUGED? FROM THE
VIETNAME WAR, OR....

THAWIT: WHAT MILITARY FORCES ARE NOT NECESSARY?

REPORTER: AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES IN THAILAND.

THAWIT: OTHER PERSONS SAY THAT THEIR PRESENCE IS

NO LONGER NECESSARY. ID DID NOT SAY THAT.

REPORTER: WHAT IS YOUR VIEW? IS THE NECESSITY FOR
THEIR PRESENCE HERE AT AN END NOW?

THAWIT: AS I HAVE SAID ALREADY, THEY SHOULD BE WITH-
DRAWN WITH PROPER TIMING. IT CONCERNS THE SITUATION OUT-
SIDE OUR COUNTRY ALSO.

REPORTER: DOES THAT MEAN THAT IN THE LONG RUN NONE
OUGHT TO BE LEFT HERE?

THAWIT: THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THAT. GOOD
HEAVENS' WHO WOULD WANT FOREIGN FORCES TO REMAIN HERE
FOREVER'

REPORTER: BUT THERE IS NO LONGER ANY NECESSITY FOR
THEM TO REMAIN IN THAILAND NOW, IS THERE?

THAWIT: WHAT DO YOU MEAN FOR CERTAIN?

REPORTER: AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES.

THAWIT: FOR THEM TO CONTINUE REMAINING HERE OR NOT?

REPORTER: YES.

THAWIT: I FEEL THAT THE NECESSITY STILL EXISTS SINCE
THE SITUATION OUTSIDE OUR COUNTRY IS STILL AS CAN BE SEEN
AT PRESENT. LOOK AT CAMBODIA. IT IS ON THE VARGE OF
COLLAPSE. PHNOM PENH HAS ALMOST FALLED NOW.

REPORTER: WILL MORE MILITARY FORCES BE SENT HERE?
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THAWIT. NO. HOW CAN THEY BE INCREASED SINCE THEY
ARE BEING WITHDRAWN GRADUALLY ALREADY? TO INCREASE THEM
WOULD BE ONLY MORE IMPROPER AND UNSUITABLE.

REPORTER: SHOULD THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA BECOME MORE
CRITICAL, WOULD WE ALLOW AMERICA TO USE BASES IN THAILAND
IN ORDER TO CARRY ON ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA?

THAWIT: I CANNOT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION. WHAT ACTION
IS TAKEN IN REGARD TO DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SITUATION IN
THE FUTURE WILL DEPEND ON THE GOVERNMENT. I CANNOT ANSWER
YOUR QUESTION... BUT I CAN GIVE YOU AN IDEA. IN ANY WAR
IN THE FUTURE, THERE IS NO COUNTRY ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD
WHICH CAN FLIGHT ON ITS OWN. THAILAND, FOR INSTANCE, IS

A VERY SMALL CONTRY SO HOW COULD IT FIGHT ALONE AGAINST ANOTHER COJNTRY WHICH POSSESSES HUGE MILITARY MIGHT? IT WOULD BE UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE. THIS IS AN ORDINARY PRINCIPLE IN THE PRESENT DAY.

REPORTER: WHAT ABOUT RED CHINA? DOES IT POSSESS INFLUENCE ENABLING IT TO MAKE OUR SITUATION DETERIORATE?

THAWIT: NO. THAT IS MY VIEW. THIS IS THE POSITION. RED CHINA DOES NOT WANT AMERICA TO HAVE BASES IN ASIA. IT WANTS THEM TO BE WITHDRAWN. DO YOU BELIEVE ME?

REPORTER: WHY?

THAWIT: I HAVE PROOF OF WHAT CHOU EN-LAI SAID TO ALL PEOPLE OF THE WORLD THREE YEARS AGO. I DISPUTE THE ARGUMENT THAT IT IS NOT AT ALL TRUE THAT RED CHINA MADE SUCH A STATMENT BECAUSE I HAVE PROOF. BUT IN ITS INNERMOST HEART, RED CHINA, OR CHOU EN-LAI WHO IS PREMIER AT PRESENT, IS NOT FEELING ANY WORRY AT ALL OVER AMERICAN BASES IN ASIA. YOU WILL HAVE SEEN THAT IN ITS PUBLIC RELATIONS, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IT IS NOT MAKING ANY DEMANDS AT ALL. NORTH VIETNAM ALONE IS MAKING DEMANDS.

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LOOK AND SEE FOR YOURSELVES. ARE AMERICAN BASES IN THAILAND BEING USED TO BOMB VIETNAM? NO PLANES CAN BE SENT FROM THEM BECAUSE THE U.S. UNCLASSIFIED

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CONGRESS HAS BANNED ANY ACTION ON THEIR PART. THEREFORE, THEY ARE NO DANGER WHATSOEVER TO VIETNAM, BUT WHY IS NORTH VIETNAM CONCENTRATING ON ITS DEMAND FOR THEM TO BE WITHDRAWN? WHAT REASON CAN THERE BE, SINCE THOSE BASES CANNOT TAKE ANY ACTION AGAINST IT NOR? TRY CONSIDERING THE MATTER YOURSELVES. THIS IS MY PERSONAL VIEW, NOT THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT, OR AS A RESULT OF ANY TALKS I HAVE HAD WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. I WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT IT IS MY PERSONAL VIEW ONLY. PONDER DEEPLY ON THIS SUBJECT YOURSELVES.

REPORTER: DOES IT MEAN THAT IT IS NORTH VIETNAM'S INTENTION TO INTERFERE IN OUR COUNTRY?

THAWIT: THINK AND REACH YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS. I WILL NOT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION BECAUSE IT MIGHT CAUSE REPERCUSSIONS. CONSIDER THE MATTER YOURSELVES. WHY IS IT CONCENTRATING ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN BASES SO URGENTLY SINCE THEY CANNOT BE USED TO TAKE ANY ACTION AT ALL AGAINST IT? OTHERWISE IT WILL HAVE NO CONTACTS WITH US. AND WHY DOES IT NOT WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS FROM LAOS AND FROM CAMBODIA? DO YOU BELIEVE IT

HAS TROOPS IN THOSE COUNTRIES? BELIEVE ME, IT IS 100 PERCENT TRUE,
AND
THEY TOTAL TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MEN. WHY DOESN'T IT WITHDRAW THEM?
WHEN
WE TAKE ANY MATTER UP FOR CONSIDERATION, WE MUST CONSIDER IT IN A
JUST
AND IMPARTIAL MANNER. FOR THE SAKE OF OUR COUNTRY WE MUST BE FAR-SIGH
TED
AND WE MUST BE JUST AND IMPARTIAL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, MILITARY PERSONNEL, PERSONAL OPINION, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BANGKO03119
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750064-0707
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750220/aaaaarok.tel
Line Count: 232
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2003 by RuthemTJ>; APPROVED <08 JAN 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW THAI DEFENSE MINISTER ON U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE GENERAL THAWIT SENIWONG NA AYUTTHAYA, WHO WAS APPOINTED
TAGS: PFOR, TH, US, (THAWIT SENIWONG NA AYUTTHAYA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006